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Reward for schools and teachers

Let it be a tool for raising quality of education

THIS is a least trodden area in our scheme of things: rewarding good work in any tangible form rather than confining ourselves to at best wordy compliments. We would run down schools and teachers, sometimes in a sweeping manner, losing sight of some of their performances despite all the constraints they are having to work under.

It is in this light that we welcome the news published in Prothom Alo about the education ministry planning to introduce incentive awards for better performing secondary schools, their teachers and even management committees. Some 1000 institutions, both government and private, at the upazila level, are likely to be the beneficiaries. The whole idea, is to foster competition among the schools to raise their bars and thereby help enhance the overall level of quality of secondary education.

The thought is noble, to be sure, but given the set of criteria, the schools already in an advantageous position in terms of facilities, teaching staff and better score cards compared with the rest are likely to get a head-start in bagging the prizes. The fact remains though that in a scheme of things where best schools are to get Tk one lakh and the best head teacher Tk 10,000, assistant teacher Tk 7,000 and the best management committee Tk 25,000 a fair amount of competition is likely to be generated with its potential for lift-pump effects.

Since the draft proposal is set to be sharpened before adoption, we have some specific ideas to advance by way of ensuring result-oriented implementation of the scheme. First of all, the proposed evaluation committee sounds officially dominated with only a college teacher from outside the pale. We suggest taking onboard some public and community representatives to broadbase the evaluation committee's representative character and ensure its neutral functioning as well. In the past, good schools and teachers had received crest of honour but this time the extensive programme being taken to tangibly reward excellence can only meet its purpose if it leads to raising the quality of secondary education even modestly. For, the quality of secondary schools is dependent on a number of factors, not the least of which is the guarantee for professional school management committees.